

β^1 then replacing portions of the first insulative material with a second insulative material having a dielectric constant lower than that of the first insulative material.

β^2 31. A method for fabricating an integrated circuit having interconnect members formed over a semiconductor surface, comprising:
providing a first insulator material between interconnect members;
then replacing portions of the first insulator material with a dielectric material having a lower dielectric constant than the first insulator material.

REMARKS

This paper is filed in response to the office action mailed April 5, 2002.
Claims 1 – 21 are allowed and claims 22-33 were rejected.

The undersigned wishes to thank the examiner for examining the claims 22 – 33. As a result, claims 27 and 31 are amended to more clearly distinguish the invention over the art of record. All of the rejections may now be removed in view of the amendment and reasons which follow.

The rejection of claims 22 and 23 is incorrectly based on a reading in which: the claimed "lower level of interconnect members" is read on Jeng's transistor gate 14 and Jeng's vias 18; as best understood, the claimed "second insulative layer" is read upon a diamond film layer 16 shown in figure 7; and "an upper level of interconnect members" is read upon layer 22 shown in figure 7. However, this reading does not allow for the claimed method and, in fact, is